

## FOUR

# ALFARABI

## The Attainment of Happiness

Translated by Muhsin Mahdi

The *Attainment of Happiness* is the first part of a trilogy entitled the *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, of which the second part is the *Philosophy of Plato* and the third part is the *Philosophy of Aristotle*. The *Attainment of Happiness* has four subdivisions. The first gives an account of (1) the theoretical virtues or theoretical sciences (including "theoretical" political science) and explains the relationship among them. The second raises and answers the question of the need for something beyond theoretical science, which answer unfolds into an account of (2) prudence or deliberation, (3) the moral virtues, and (4) the practical arts; and discusses the relationship among these four things in an individual. The third gives an account of the methods through which these four are realized in a nation or a city, which unfolds into a discussion of the qualities of the ruler and the structure of the city, and its opinions and actions. The fourth begins with praise of theoretical science or philosophy, and then proceeds to discuss the relation between

the philosopher and the prince, between philosophy and religion, and between true and false philosophy. This is perhaps Alfarabi's most fundamental work; it provides the philosophic framework on the basis of which his didactic and political works ought to be understood. The sections omitted here (2–15 [sec. 1 is given in note 6]) deal with logic, mathematics, and physics.

A Hebrew paraphrase of the *Attainment of Happiness* is included in Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's *Introduction to Science*, which in turn was translated into Latin. The following translation is based on an edition in progress. The numbers inserted in the translation refer to the Hyderabad text: *Tahṣīl al-sa'āda* (1345 AH), 12–47. The variants adopted here were given in "Notes to the Arabic Text of the *Attainment of Happiness*," in *Alfarabi: The Political Writings; Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, ed. and trans. Muhsin Mahdi (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962; rev. ed., Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969, 2002), 150–56.

### SUBDIVISION 1

16. When one finally comes to inquire into the heavenly bodies and investigate the principles of their being, this inquiry into the principles of their

being will force one to look for principles that are not natures or natural things, but beings more perfect than nature and natural things. They are also



not bodies or in bodies. Therefore, one needs another kind of investigation here and another science that inquires exclusively into beings that are metaphysical. At this point he is again standing between two sciences: the science of nature and [metaphysics, or] the science of what is beyond natural things [13] in the order of investigation and instruction and above them in the order of being.

17. When his inquiry finally reaches the stage of investigating the principles of the being of animals, he will be forced to inquire into the soul and learn about psychical [or animate] principles, and from there ascend to the inquiry into the rational animal. As he investigates the principles of the latter, he will be forced to inquire into (1) *what, by what, and how*, (2–3) *from what*, and (4) *for what* it is.<sup>1</sup> It is here that he acquaints himself with the intellect and things intelligible. He needs to investigate (1) *what* the intellect is and *by what* and *how* it is, and (2–3) *from what* and (4) *for what* it is. This investigation will force him to look for other principles that are not bodies or in bodies, and that never were or ever will be in bodies. This inquiry into the rational animal will thus lead him to a similar conclusion as the inquiry into the heavenly bodies. Now he acquaints himself with incorporeal principles that are to the beings below the heavenly bodies as those incorporeal principles (with which he became acquainted when investigating the heavenly bodies) are to the heavenly bodies. He will acquaint himself with the principles for the sake of which the soul and the intellect are made, and with the ends and the ultimate perfection for the sake of which man is made. He will know that the natural principles in man and in the world are not sufficient for man's coming to that perfection for the sake of whose achievement he is made. It will become evident that man needs some rational, intellectual principles with which to work toward that perfection.

18. At this point the inquirer will have sighted another genus of things, different from the metaphysical. It is incumbent on man to investigate what is included in this genus: that is, the things that realize for man his objective through the intellectual principles that are in him, and by which he achieves that perfection which became known

in natural science. It will become evident concomitantly that these rational principles are not mere causes by which man attains the perfection for which he is made. Moreover, he will know that these [14] rational principles also supply many things to natural beings other than those supplied by nature. Indeed, man arrives at the ultimate perfection (whereby he attains that which renders him truly substantial) only when he labors with these principles toward achieving this perfection. Moreover, he cannot labor toward this perfection except by exploiting a large number of natural beings and until he manipulates them to render them useful to him for arriving at the ultimate perfection he should achieve. Furthermore, it will become evident to him in this science that each man achieves only a portion of that perfection, and what he achieves of this portion varies in its extent, for an isolated individual cannot achieve all the perfections by himself and without the aid of many other individuals. It is the innate disposition of every man to join another human being or other men in the labor he ought to perform: this is the condition of every single man. Therefore, to achieve what he can of that perfection, every man needs to stay in the neighborhood of others and associate with them. It is also the innate nature of this animal to seek shelter and to dwell in the neighborhood of those who belong to the same species, which is why he is called the social and political animal. There emerges now another science and another inquiry that investigates these intellectual principles and the acts and states of character with which man labors toward this perfection. From this, in turn, emerge the science of man and political science.

19. He should begin to inquire into the metaphysical beings and, in treating them, use the methods he used in treating natural things. He should use as their principles of instruction<sup>2</sup> the first premises that happen to be available and are appropriate to this genus, and in addition, the demonstrations of [15] natural science that fit as principles of instruction in this genus. These should be arranged according to the order mentioned above,<sup>3</sup> until one covers every being in this genus. It will become evident to whoever investigates these beings that none of them can possess

1. These are the four ways of interpreting and asking the question *why*, which Alfarabi has indicated previously in secs. 5 ff.; they ask after (1) the form, (2–3) the agent and the material, and (4) the end.

2. For the source of the distinction between the "principle of instruction" and the "principle of being," between "what is better

known to us" and "what is better known by nature," consider Aristotle *Physics* 184a16–23, 189a4 (cf. *Posterior Analytics* 71b34–72a6); *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095a30 ff., 1139b25 ff.

3. Secs. 4 ff.

join  
police.  
friends.  
clubs



any matter at all; one ought to investigate every one of them only as to (1) *what and how* it is, (2–3) *from what* agent and (4) *for what* it is. He should continue this investigation until he finally reaches a being that cannot possess any of these principles at all (either *what* it is or *from what* it is or *for what* it is) but is itself the first principle of all the aforementioned beings: it is itself that *by which*, *from which*, and *for which* they are, in the most perfect modes in which a thing can be a principle for the beings, modes free from all defects. Having understood this, he should investigate next what properties the other beings possess as a consequence of their having this being as their principle and the cause of their being. He should begin with the being whose rank is higher than the rest (that is, the one nearest to the first principle), until he terminates in the being whose rank is inferior to the rest (that is, the one farthest from the first principle). He will thus come to know the ultimate causes of the beings. This is the divine inquiry into them. For the first principle is the divinity, and the principles that come after it—and are not bodies or in bodies—are the divine principles.

20. Then he should set out next upon the science of man and investigate the *what* and the *how* of the purpose for which man is made, that is, the perfection that man must achieve. Then he should investigate all the things by which man achieves this perfection or that are useful to him in achieving it. These are the good, virtuous, and noble things. He should distinguish them from [16] the things that obstruct his achieving this perfection. These are the evils, the vices, and the base things. He should

make known *what* and *how* every one of them is, and *from what* and *for what* it is, until all of them become known, intelligible, and distinguished from each other. This is political science.<sup>4</sup> It consists of knowing the things by which the citizens of cities attain happiness through political association in the measure that innate disposition equips each of them for it. It will become evident to him that political association and the totality that results from the association of citizens in cities correspond to the association of the bodies that constitute the totality of the world. He will come to see in what are included in the totality constituted by the city and the nation the likenesses of what are included in the total world. Just as in the world there is a first principle, then other principles subordinate to it, beings that proceed from these principles, other beings subordinate to these beings, until they terminate in the beings with the lowest rank in the order of being, so the nation or the city includes a supreme commander, followed by other commanders,<sup>5</sup> followed by other citizens, who in turn are followed by other citizens, until they terminate in the citizens with the lowest rank as citizens and as human beings. Thus the city includes the likenesses of the things included in the total world.

21. This, then, is theoretical perfection. As you see, it comprises knowledge of the four kinds of things<sup>6</sup> by which the citizens of cities and nations attain supreme happiness. What still remains is that these four be realized and have actual existence in nations and cities while conforming to the account of them given by the theoretical affairs (*al-umūr al-naẓariyya*).<sup>7</sup>

## SUBDIVISION 2

22. Do you suppose that these theoretical [sciences] have also given an account of the means by which these four can be [17] actually realized in nations and cities, or not? They have indeed given an account of the latter as they are perceived by the

intellect. Now if it were the case that to give an account of these things as they are perceived by the intellect is to give an account of their [actual] existence, it would follow that the theoretical sciences have given an account of them as actually existent.

4. That is, the "theoretical" part of it. Cf. below, sec. 26; cf. selection 1, *Enumeration of the Sciences* 1–3; and cf. selection 2, *Book of Religion* 5, 11–18.

5. Alfarabi says "first principle" and "principles," respectively; cf. the physical-metaphysical and political connotations of *archē* (*archōn*): *principium-princeps*, "principle"-"prince."

6. Enumerated by Alfarabi in sec. 1: "The human things by which nations and citizens of cities attain earthly happiness

in this life and supreme happiness in the life beyond are of four kinds: theoretical virtues, deliberative virtues, moral virtues, and practical arts."

7. Alfarabi's choice of "affairs" (*al-umūr*) here, where one might expect "sciences" (*al-'ulūm*), becomes all the more striking because he delays using "sciences" until the middle of the next paragraph. Perhaps he avoids "sciences" at the end of sec. 1 to emphasize the inconclusiveness of the inquiry described therein.



(For instance, if it were the case that giving an intelligible account of architecture and perceiving by the intellect what constitutes architecture and what constitutes a building make an architect of the man who has intellected what manner of thing the art of building is, or, if it were the case that giving an intelligible account of a building is to give an account of its actual existence, then the theoretical sciences (*al-'ulūm al-naẓariyya*) do both.) But if it is not the case that the intellection of a thing implies its existence outside the intellect, and that to give an intelligible account of it is to give an account of its actual existence; then, when one intends to make these four things exist, he necessarily requires something else beside theoretical science.

23. That is because things perceived by the intellect are as such free from the states and accidents that they have when they exist outside the [thinking] soul. In what remains numerically one, these accidents do not vary or change at all; they do vary, however, in what remains one, not numerically, but in the species. Therefore when it is necessary to make the things perceived by the intellect and remaining one in their species exist outside the soul, one must join to them the states and accidents that must accompany them if they are to have actual existence outside the soul. This applies to the natural intelligibles, which are and remain one in their species, as well as to the voluntary intelligibles.<sup>8</sup>

24. However, the natural intelligibles, which exist outside the soul, exist from nature only, and it is by nature that they are accompanied with their accidents. As for the intelligibles that can be made to exist outside the soul by will, the accidents [18] and states that accompany them when they come into being are willed too. Now voluntary intelligibles cannot exist unless they are accompanied with these accidents and states. Since everything whose existence is willed cannot be made to exist unless it is first known, it follows that when one plans to bring any voluntary intelligible into actual existence outside the soul, he must first know the states that must accompany it when it exists. Because voluntary intelligibles do not belong to things that are one numerically, but in their species or genus; the accidents and states that must accompany them vary constantly, increase and decrease, and fall into combinations that cannot be

covered at all by invariable and unchangeable formal rules. Indeed for some of them no rule can be established. For others rules can be established, but they are variable rules and changeable definitions. Those for which no rule at all can be established are the ones that vary constantly and over short periods. The others, for which rules can be established, are those whose states vary over long periods. Those of them that come to exist are for the most part realized by the agency of whoever wills and does them. Yet because of obstacles standing in their way—some of which are natural and others voluntary, resulting from the wills of other individuals—sometimes none of them at all is realized. Furthermore, they suffer not only temporal variations, so that they may exist at a certain time with accidents and states different from those that accompany them at another time before or after; their states also differ when they exist in different places. This is evident in natural things, for example, Man. For when it [that is, the intelligible idea Man] assumes actual existence outside the soul, [19] the states and accidents in it at one time are different from the ones it has at another time, after or before. The same is the case with respect to different places. The accidents and states it has when existing in one country are different from the ones it has in another. Yet, throughout, the intellect perceives Man as a single intelligible idea. This holds for voluntary things as well. For instance, Moderation, Wealth, and the like are voluntary ideas perceived by the intellect. When we decide to make them actually exist, the accidents that must accompany them at a certain time will be different from the accidents that must accompany them at another time, and the accidents they must have when they exist in one nation will be different from those they must have when existing in another. In some of them, these accidents change from hour to hour, in others from day to day, in others from month to month, in others from year to year, in others from decade to decade, and in still others they change after many decades. Therefore, whoever should will to bring any of them into actual existence outside the soul ought to know the variable accidents that must accompany it, in the specific period at which he seeks to bring it into existence, and in the determined place in the inhabited part of the earth. Thus he ought to know the accidents that must accompany what is

8. The distinction between "natural" and "voluntary" intelligibles and the meaning of "voluntary" intelligibles is stated below, secs. 24 ff.



willed to exist from hour to hour, from month to month, from year to year, from decade to decade, or in some other period of determinate length, in a determined locality of large or small size. And he ought to know which of these accidents are common to all nations, to some nations, or to one city over a long period, common to them over a short period, or pertain to some of them specifically and over a short period.

25. The accidents and states of these intelligibles vary [20] whenever certain events occur in the inhabited part of the earth: events common to all of it, to a certain nation or city, or to a certain group within a city, or pertaining to a single man. Such events are either natural or willed.

26. Things of this sort are not covered by the theoretical sciences, which cover only the intelligibles that do not vary at all. Therefore, another faculty and another skill is required with which to discern the voluntary intelligibles [not as such, but] insofar as they possess these variable accidents: that is, the modes according to which they can be brought into actual existence by the will at a determined time, in a determined place, and when a determined event occurs. That is the deliberative faculty.<sup>9</sup> It is the skill and the faculty by which one discovers and discerns the variable accidents of the intelligibles whose particular instances are made to exist by the will; when one attempts to bring them into actual existence by the will at a determined time, in a determined place; and when a determined event takes place, whether the time is long or short, whether the locality is large or small.

27. Things are discovered by the deliberative faculty only insofar as they are found to be useful for the attainment of an end and purpose. The discoverer first sets the end before himself and then investigates the means by which that end and that purpose are realized. The deliberative faculty is most perfect when it discovers what is most useful for the attainment of these ends. The ends may be truly good, may be evil, or may be only believed to be good. If the means discovered are the most useful for a virtuous end, then they are noble and fair. [21] If the ends are evil, then the means discovered by the deliberative faculty are also evil, base, and bad. And if the ends are only believed to be good, then the means useful for attaining and achieving them are also only believed to be

good. The deliberative faculty can be classified accordingly. Deliberative virtue is that by which one discovers what is most useful for some virtuous end. As for the deliberative faculty by which one discovers what is most useful for an evil end, it is not a deliberative virtue but ought to have other names. And if the deliberative faculty is used to discover what is most useful for things that are only believed to be good, then that deliberative faculty is only believed to be a deliberative virtue.

28. (1) There is a certain deliberative virtue that enables one to excel in the discovery of what is most useful for a virtuous end common to many nations, to a whole nation, or to a whole city, at a time when an event occurs that affects them in common. (There is no difference between saying "most useful" for a virtuous end and "most useful and most noble," because what is both most useful and most noble necessarily serves a virtuous end, and what is most useful for a virtuous end is indeed the most noble with respect to that end.) This is political deliberative virtue. The events that affect them in common may persist over a long period or vary within short periods. However, political deliberative virtue is the deliberative virtue that discovers the most useful and most noble that is common to many nations, to a whole nation, or to a whole city, irrespective of whether what is discovered persists there for a long period or varies over a short period. When it is concerned exclusively with the discovery of the things that are common to many nations, to a whole nation, [22] or to a whole city, and that do not vary except over many decades or over longer periods of determinate length, then it is more akin to a legislative ability. (2) The deliberative virtue with which one discovers only what varies over short periods: this is the faculty that manages the different classes of particular, temporary tasks in conjunction with, and at the occurrence of, the events that affect all nations, a certain nation, or a certain city. It is subordinate to the former. (3) The faculty by which one discovers what is most useful and noble, or what is most useful for a virtuous end, relative to one group among the citizens of a city or to the members of a household: it consists of a variety of deliberative virtues, each associated with the group in question; for instance, it is economic deliberative virtue or military deliberative virtue. Each of these, in turn, is subdivided inasmuch as

9. The "rationative," "thinking," "calculative," or "reflective" faculty (*fikriyya*).

*Furqan*



what it discovers (a) does not vary except over long periods or (b) varies over short periods. (4) The deliberative virtue may be subdivided into still smaller fractions, such as the virtue by which one discovers what is most useful and noble with respect to the purpose of particular arts or with respect to particular purposes that happen to be pursued at particular times. Thus it will have as many subdivisions as there are arts and ways of life. (5) Furthermore, this faculty can be divided also insofar as (a) it enables man to excel in the discovery of what is most useful and noble with respect to his own end when an event occurs that concerns him specifically, and (b) it is a deliberative virtue by which he discovers what is most useful and noble with respect to a virtuous end to be attained by somebody else—the latter is consultative deliberative virtue. These two may be united in a single man or may exist separately.

29. It is obvious that the one who possesses a virtue by which he discovers what is most useful and noble, and this for the sake of a virtuous end that is good (irrespective of whether what is discovered is a true good that he wishes [23] for himself, a true good that he wishes someone else to possess, or something that is believed to be good by whomever he wishes it for), cannot possess this faculty without possessing a moral virtue. For if a man wishes the good for others, then he is either truly good or else believed to be good by those for whom he wishes the good although he is not good and virtuous. Similarly, he who wishes the true good for himself has to be good and virtuous, not in his deliberation, but in his moral character and in his acts. It would seem that his virtue, moral character, and acts, have to correspond to his power of deliberation and ability to discover what is most useful and noble. Hence, if he discovers by his deliberative virtue only those most useful and noble means that are of great force (such as what is most useful for a virtuous end common to a whole nation, to many nations, or to a whole city, and does not vary except over a long period), then his moral virtues ought to be of a comparable measure. Similarly, if his deliberative virtues are confined to means that are most useful for a restricted end when a specific event occurs, then this is the measure of his [moral] virtue also. Accordingly, the more perfect the authority and the greater the power of these deliberative virtues, the stronger the authority and the greater the power of the moral virtues that accompany them.

30. (1) Since the deliberative virtue by which one discovers what is most useful and noble with respect to the ends that do not vary except over long periods and that are common to many nations, to a whole nation, or to a whole city when an event that affects them in common occurs, has more perfect authority and greater power; the [moral] virtues that accompany it should possess the most perfect authority and the greatest power. [24] (2) Next follows the deliberative virtue with which one excels in the discovery of what is most useful for a common, though temporary end, over short periods; the [moral] virtues that accompany it are of a comparable rank. (3) Then follow the deliberative virtues confined to individual parts of the city—the warriors, the rich, and so on; the moral virtues that have to do with these parts are of a comparable rank. (4) Finally, one comes to the deliberative virtues related to single arts (taking into account the purposes of these arts) and to single households and single human beings within single households (with attention to what pertains to them as events follow one another hour after hour or day after day); they are accompanied by a [moral] virtue of a comparable rank.

31. Therefore one ought to investigate which virtue is the perfect and most powerful virtue. Is it the combination of all the virtues? Or, if one virtue (or a number of virtues) turns out to have a power equal to that of all the virtues together, what ought to be the distinctive mark of the virtue that has this power and is hence the most powerful virtue? This virtue is such that when a man decides to fulfill its functions, he cannot do so without making use of the functions of all the other virtues. If he himself does not happen to possess all of these virtues—in which case he cannot make use of the functions of particular virtues present in him when he decides to fulfill the functions of that virtue—that virtue of his will be a moral virtue in the exercise of which he exploits the acts of the virtues possessed by all others; whether they are nations, cities within a nation, groups within a city, or parts within each group. This, then, is the leading virtue that is not surpassed by any other in authority. [25] Next follow the virtues that resemble this one in that they have a similar power with respect to single parts of the city. For instance, together with the deliberative faculty by which he discovers what is most useful and noble with respect to that which is common to warriors, the general ought to possess a moral virtue. When he decides to fulfill the functions of the latter, he exploits the virtues possessed by the



warriors as warriors. His courage, for instance, ought to be such as to enable him to exploit the warriors' particular acts of courage. Similarly, the one who possesses a deliberative virtue by which he discovers what is most useful and noble for the ends of those who acquire wealth in the city ought to possess the moral virtue that enables him to exploit the particular virtues of the classes of people engaged in acquiring wealth.

32. The arts, too, ought to follow this pattern. The leading art that is not surpassed by any other in authority is such that when we decide to fulfill its functions, we are unable to do so without making use of the functions of all the arts. It is the art for the fulfillment of whose purpose we require all the other arts. This, then, is the leading art and the most powerful of the arts—just as the corresponding moral virtue was the most powerful of all the moral virtues. It is then followed by the rest of the arts. An art of a certain class among them is more perfect and more powerful than the rest in its class if its end can be fulfilled only by making use of the functions of the other arts in its class. Such is the status of the leading military arts. For instance, the art of commanding armies is such that its purpose can be achieved only by making use of the functions of the particular arts of warfare.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the [26] leading art of wealth in the city is such that its purpose with regard to wealth can be achieved only by exploiting the particular arts of acquiring wealth. This is the case also in every other major part of the city.

33. Furthermore, it is obvious that what is most useful and noble is in every case either most noble according to generally accepted opinion, most noble according to a particular religion, or truly most noble. Similarly, virtuous ends are either virtuous and good according to generally accepted opinion, virtuous and good according to a particular religion, or truly virtuous and good. No one can discover what is most noble according to the followers of a particular religion unless his moral virtues are the specific virtues of that religion. This holds for everyone else; it applies to the more powerful virtues as well as to the more particular and less powerful. Therefore the most powerful deliberative virtue and the most powerful moral virtue are inseparable from each other.

34. It is evident that the deliberative virtue with the highest authority can only be subordinate to

the theoretical virtue; for it merely discerns the accidents of the intelligibles that, prior to having these accidents as their accompaniments, are acquired by the theoretical virtue. If it is determined that the one who possesses the deliberative virtue should discover the variable accidents and states of only those intelligibles of which he has personal insight and personal knowledge (so as not to make discoveries about things that perhaps ought not to take place), then the deliberative virtue cannot be separated from the theoretical virtue. It follows that the theoretical virtue, the leading deliberative virtue, the leading moral virtue, and the leading [practical] art are inseparable from each other; otherwise the latter [three] will be unsound, imperfect, and without complete authority. [27]

35. But if, after the theoretical virtue has caused the intellect to perceive the moral virtues, the latter can only be made to exist if the deliberative virtue discerns them and discovers the accidents that must accompany their intelligibles so that they can be brought into existence, then the deliberative virtue is anterior to the moral virtues. If it is anterior to them, then he who possesses the deliberative virtue discovers by it only such moral virtues as exist independently of the deliberative virtues. Yet if the deliberative virtue is independent of the moral virtue, then he who has the capacity for discovering the (good) moral virtues will not himself be good, not even in a single virtue.<sup>11</sup> But if he himself is not good, how then does he seek out the good or wish the true good for himself or for others? And if he does not wish the good, how is he capable of discovering it without having set it before himself as an end? Therefore, if the deliberative virtue is independent of the moral virtue, it is not possible to discover the moral virtue with it. Yet if the moral virtue is inseparable from the deliberative, and they coexist, how could the deliberative virtue discover the moral and join itself to it? For if they are inseparable, it will follow that the deliberative virtue did not discover the moral virtue; while if the deliberative virtue did discover the moral virtue, it will follow that the deliberative virtue is independent of the moral virtue. Therefore, either the deliberative virtue itself is the virtue of goodness or one should assume that the deliberative virtue is accompanied by some other virtue, different from the moral virtue that is discovered by the deliberative faculty. If that other moral

10. "Warfare" here is from the root *h.r.b.*

11. Cf. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.12, 13.



virtue is formed by the will also, it follows that the deliberative virtue discovered it—thus the original doubt recurs. It follows, then, that there must be some other moral virtue—other, that is, than the one discovered by the deliberative virtue—which accompanies the deliberative virtue and enables the possessor of the deliberative virtue to wish the good and the virtuous end. [28] That virtue must be natural and must come into being by nature, and it must be coupled with a certain deliberative virtue [that is, cleverness] which comes into being by nature and discovers the moral virtues formed by the will. The virtue formed by the will will then be the human virtue by which man, after acquiring it in the way in which he acquires voluntary things, acquires the human deliberative virtue.

36. But one ought to inquire what manner of thing that natural virtue is. Is it or is it not identical with this voluntary virtue? Or ought one to say that it corresponds to this virtue, like the states of character that exist in irrational animals?—just as it is said that courage resides in the lion, cunning in the fox, shiftiness in the bear, thievishness in the magpie, and so forth. For it is possible that every man is innately so disposed that his soul has a power such that he generally moves more easily in the direction of the accomplishment of a certain virtue or of a certain state of character than in the direction of doing the opposite act. Indeed man moves first in the direction in which it is easier for

him to move, provided he is not compelled to do something else. For instance, if a man is innately so disposed that he is more prone to stand his ground against dangers than to recoil before them, then all he needs is to undergo the experience a sufficient number of times and this state of character becomes voluntary. Prior to this, he possessed the corresponding natural state of character. If this is so in particular moral virtues that accompany particular deliberative virtues, it must also be the case with the highest moral virtues that accompany the highest deliberative virtues. If this is so, it follows that there are some men who are innately disposed to a [natural moral] virtue that corresponds to the highest [human moral] virtue and that is joined to a naturally superior deliberative power, others just below them, and so forth. [29] If this is so, then not every chance human being will possess art, moral virtue, and deliberative virtue with great power.

37. Therefore the prince occupies his place by nature and not merely by will. Similarly, a subordinate occupies his place primarily by nature and only secondarily by virtue of the will, which perfects his natural equipment. This being the case, the theoretical virtue, the highest deliberative virtue, the highest moral virtue, and the highest practical art are realized only in those equipped for them by nature: that is, in those who possess superior natures with very great potentialities.

### SUBDIVISION 3

38. After these four things are realized in a certain man, the realization of the particular instances of them in nations and cities still remains; his knowing how to make these particular instances exist in nations and cities remains: he who possesses such a great power ought to possess the capacity of realizing the particular instances of it in nations and cities.

39. There are two primary methods of realizing them: instruction and the formation of character.

To instruct is to introduce the theoretical virtues in nations and cities. The formation of character is the method of introducing the moral virtues and practical arts in nations. Instruction proceeds by speech alone. The formation of character proceeds through

*navyhamie*  
habituating nations and citizens in doing the acts that issue from the practical states of character by arousing in them the resolution to do these acts; the states of character and the acts issuing from them should come to possess their souls, and they should be, as it were, enraptured by them. The resolution to do a thing may be aroused by speech or by deed.

40. Instruction in the theoretical sciences should be given either to the imams and the princes, or else to those who should preserve the theoretical sciences. The instruction of these two groups proceeds by means of identical approaches. These are the approaches [30] stated above.<sup>12</sup> First, they should know the first premises and the primary knowledge relative to every kind of theoretical



science. Then they should know the various states of the premises and their various arrangements as stated before,<sup>13</sup> and be made to pursue the subjects that were mentioned. (Prior to this, their souls must have been set aright through the training befitting the youths whose natures entitle them to this rank in the order of humanity.) They should be habituated to use all the logical methods in all the theoretical sciences. And they should be made to pursue a course of study and form the habits of character from their childhood until each of them reaches maturity, in accordance with the plan described by Plato.<sup>14</sup> Then the princes among them will be placed in subordinate offices and promoted gradually through the ranks until they are fifty years old. Then they will be placed in the office with the highest authority. This, then, is the way to instruct this group; they are the elect who should not be confined to what is in conformity with unexamined common opinion. Until they acquire the theoretical virtues, they ought to be instructed in things theoretical by means of persuasive methods. They should comprehend many theoretical things by way of imagining them. These are the things—the ultimate principles and the incorporeal principles—that a man cannot perceive by his intellect except after knowing many other things. The vulgar ought to comprehend merely the similitudes of these principles, which should be established in their souls by persuasive arguments. One should draw a distinction between the similitudes that ought to be presented to every nation, and in which all nations and all the citizens of every city should share, and the ones that ought to be presented to a particular nation and not to another, to a particular city and not to another, or to a particular group among the citizens of a city [31] and not to another. All these [persuasive arguments and similitudes] must be discerned by the deliberative virtue.

41. They [the princes, the imams, etc.] should be habituated in the acts of the practical<sup>15</sup> virtues and the practical arts by either of two methods: first, by means of persuasive arguments, passionate arguments, and other arguments that establish these acts and states of character in the soul completely so as to arouse the resolution to do the acts willingly. This method is made possible by the practice

of the logical arts—to which the mind is naturally inclined—and by the benefits derived from such practice. The other method is compulsion. It is used with the recalcitrant and the obstinate among those citizens of cities and nations who do not rise in favor of what is right willingly and of their own accord or by means of arguments, and also with those who refuse to teach others the theoretical sciences in which they are engaged.

42. Now since the virtue or the art of the prince is exercised by exploiting the acts of those who possess the particular virtues and the arts of those who practice the particular arts, it follows necessarily that the virtuous and the masters of the arts whom he [the prince] employs to form the character of nations and citizens of cities comprise two primary groups: a group employed by him to form the character of whoever is susceptible of having his character formed willingly, and a group employed by him to form the character of those who are such that their character can be formed only by compulsion. This is analogous to what heads of households and superintendents of children and youths do. For the prince forms the character of nations and instructs them, just as the head of a household forms the character of its members and instructs them, and the superintendent of children and youths forms their character and instructs them. Just as each of the last two forms the character of some of those who are in his custody [32] by being gentle to them and by persuasion and forms the character of others by compulsion, so does the prince. Indeed it is by virtue of the very same skill in [all three] classes of men who form the character of others and superintend them that they undertake both the compulsory formation of character and the formation of character received willingly; the skill varies only with respect to its degree and the extent of its power.<sup>16</sup> Thus the power required for forming the character of nations and for superintending them is greater than the power required for forming the character of children and youths or the power required by heads of households for forming the character of the members of a household. Correspondingly, the power of the princes who are the superintendents of nations and cities and who form their character, and the power of whomever and whatever they

13. Secs. 4 ff.

14. *Republic* 376E–427C, 521C–41B.

15. That is, deliberative and moral.

16. Note, however, the end of the section and the following sections, where the dual aspect of this skill is emphasized.



employ in performing this function, are greater. The prince needs the most powerful skill for forming the character of others with their consent and the most powerful skill for forming their character by compulsion.

43. The latter is the craft of war:<sup>17</sup> that is, the faculty that enables him to excel in organizing and leading armies and utilizing war implements and warlike people to conquer the nations and cities that do not submit to doing what will procure them that happiness for whose acquisition man is made. For every being is made to achieve the ultimate perfection it is susceptible of achieving according to its specific place in the order of being. Man's specific perfection is called supreme happiness, and to each man, according to his rank in the order of humanity, belongs the specific supreme happiness pertaining to his kind of man. The warrior who pursues this purpose is the just warrior, and the art of war that pursues this purpose is the just and virtuous art of war.

44. The other group, employed to form the character of nations and the citizens of cities with their consent, is composed of those who possess the natural virtues and arts. For it is obvious that the prince needs to return to the theoretical, intelligible things [33] whose knowledge was acquired by certain demonstrations, look for the persuasive methods that can be employed for each, and seek out all the persuasive methods that can be employed for it (he can do this because he possesses the power to be persuasive about individual cases). Then he should repair to these very same theoretical things and seize upon their similitudes. He ought to make these similitudes produce images of the theoretical things for all nations jointly, so establish the similitudes that persuasive methods can cause them to be accepted, and exert himself throughout to make both the similitudes and the persuasive methods such that all nations and cities may share in them. Next he needs to enumerate the acts of the particular practical virtues and arts that fulfill the above-mentioned requirements.<sup>18</sup> He should devise methods of political oratory with which to arouse the resolution to such acts [in nations and cities]. He should employ here: (1) arguments that support [the rightness of] his own character; (2) passionate and moral arguments that cause (a) the souls of the citizens

to grow reverent, submissive, muted, and meek. But with respect to everything contrary to these acts he should employ (b) passionate and moral arguments by which the souls of the citizens grow confident, spiteful, insolent, and contemptuous. He should employ these same two kinds of arguments [a and b], respectively, with the princes who agree with him and with those who oppose him, with the men and the auxiliaries employed by him and with the ones employed by those who oppose him, and with the virtuous and with those who oppose them. Thus with respect to his own position, he should employ arguments by which souls grow reverent and submissive. But with respect to his opponents he should employ arguments that cause souls to grow spiteful, insolent, and contemptuous; arguments with which he contradicts, using persuasive methods, those who disagree with his own opinions and acts; and arguments that show the opinions and acts of the opponent as base and make their meanness and notoriety apparent. He should employ here [34] both classes of arguments: I mean the class that should be employed periodically, daily, and temporarily, and not preserved, kept permanently, or written down; and the other class, which should be preserved and kept permanently, orally and in writing. [The latter should be kept in two Books, a Book of Opinions and a Book of Actions.] He should place in these two Books the opinions and the acts that nations and cities were called upon to embrace, the arguments by which he sought to preserve among them and to establish in them the things they were called upon to embrace so that they will not be forgotten, and the arguments with which he contradicts the opponents of these opinions and acts. Therefore the sciences that form the character of nations and cities will have three orders of rank [the first belongs to the theoretical sciences themselves, the second to the popular theoretical sciences, and the third to the image-making theoretical sciences]. Each kind will have a group to preserve it who should be drawn from among those who possess the faculty that enables them to excel in the discovery of what had not been clearly stated to them with reference to the science they preserve, to defend it, to contradict what contradicts it, and to excel in teaching all of this to others. In all of this, they should aim at

17. All of the terms for "war" and their cognates in this section are from the root *h.r.b.*

18. Secs. 41–43, perhaps also secs. 28 ff.



accomplishing the purpose of the supreme ruler with respect to nations and cities.

45. Then he [the supreme ruler] should inquire next into the different classes of nations by inquiring into every nation and into the human states of character and the acts for which all nations are equipped by that nature which is common to them, until he comes to inquire into all or most nations. He should inquire into that in which all nations share—that is, the human nature common to them—and then into all the things that pertain specifically to every group within every nation. He should discern all of these, draw up an actual—if approximate—list of the acts and the states of character with which every nation can be set aright and guided toward happiness, and specify the classes of persuasive argument (regarding both the theoretical and the practical virtues) that ought to be employed among them. He will thus set down what every nation is capable of, having subdivided every nation and inquired whether or not there is a group fit for preserving the theoretical sciences [35] and others who can preserve the popular theoretical sciences or the image-making theoretical sciences.<sup>19</sup>

46. Provided all of these groups exist in nations, four sciences will emerge: first, the theoretical virtue through which the beings become intelligible with certain demonstrations; next, these same intelligibles acquired by persuasive methods; subsequently, the science that comprises the similitudes of these intelligibles, accepted by persuasive methods; finally, the sciences extracted from these three for each nation. There will be as many of these extracted sciences as there are nations, each containing everything by which a particular nation becomes perfect and happy.

47. Therefore he [the supreme ruler] has to find certain groups of men or certain individuals who are to be instructed in what causes the happiness of particular nations, who will preserve what can form the character of a particular nation alone, and who will learn the persuasive methods that should be employed in forming the character of that nation. The knowledge which that nation ought to have must be preserved by a man or a group of men also possessing the faculty that

enables them to excel in the discovery of what was not actually given to this man or this group of men but is, nevertheless, of the same kind for which they act as custodians, enables them to defend it and contradict what opposes it, and to excel in the instruction of that nation. In all of this, they should aim at accomplishing what the supreme ruler had in mind for the nation, for whose sake he gave this man or this group of men what was given to them. Such are the men who should be employed to form the character of nations with their consent.

48. The best course is that each member of the groups to which the formation of the character of nations is delegated should possess a warlike<sup>20</sup> virtue and a deliberative virtue for use in case there is need to excel in leading troops in war; [36] thus every one of them will possess the skill to form the [nation's] character by both methods. If this combination does not happen to exist in one man, then he [the supreme ruler] should add to the man who forms the character of nations with their consent, another who possesses this craft of war. In turn, the one to whom the formation of the character of any nation is delegated should also follow the custom of employing a group of men to form the character of the nation with its consent or by compulsion, either by dividing them into two groups or employing a single group that possesses a skill for doing both. Subsequently, this one group, or the two groups, should be subdivided, and so on, ending in the lowest divisions or the ones with the least power in the formation of character. The ranks within these groups should be established according to the deliberative virtue of each individual: that is, depending on whether this deliberative virtue exploits subordinate ones or is exploited by one superior to it. The former will rule and the latter have a subordinate office according to the power of their respective deliberative virtues. When these two groups are formed in any nation or city, they, in turn, will order the rest.

49. These, then, are the modes and methods through which the four human things by which supremé happiness is achieved are realized in nations and cities.

19. The latter two sciences are (derivatively) "theoretical" (or "philosophic"; cf. sec. 55 [40:12–13]) inasmuch as (a) they deal with opinions (vs. acts), and (b) their subjects were originally seized upon in the theoretical sciences properly so called (above, sec. 44; below, sec. 46).

20. All terms translated as "war" and their cognates in this section are derived from the root *h.r.b.*



*elect - electa*  
*vulgar - multitude*

#### SUBDIVISION 4

50. Foremost among all of these [four] sciences is that which gives an account of the beings as they are perceived by the intellect with certain demonstrations. The others merely take these same beings and employ persuasion about them or represent them with images so as to facilitate the instruction of the multitude of the nations and the citizens of cities. That is because nations and the citizens of cities are composed of some who are the elect and others who are the vulgar. The vulgar confine themselves, or should be confined, to theoretical cognitions that are in conformity with unexamined common opinion. [37] The elect do not confine themselves in any of their theoretical cognitions to what is in conformity with unexamined common opinion, but reach their conviction and knowledge on the basis of premises subjected to thorough scrutiny. Therefore whoever thinks that he is not confined to what is in conformity with unexamined common opinion in his inquiries, believes that in them he is of the "elect" and that everybody else is vulgar. Hence, the competent practitioner of every art comes to be called one of the "elect" because people know that he does not confine himself, with respect to the objects of his art, to what is in conformity with unexamined common opinion, but exhausts them and scrutinizes them thoroughly. Again, whoever does not hold a political office or does not possess an art that establishes his claim to a political office, but either possesses no art at all or is enabled by his art to hold only a subordinate office in the city, is said to be "vulgar"; and whoever holds a political office or else possesses an art that enables him to aspire to a political office is of the "elect." Therefore, whoever thinks that he possesses an art that qualifies him for assuming a political office or thinks that his position has the same status as a political office (for instance, men with prominent ancestors and many who possess great wealth) calls himself one of the "elect" and a "statesman."

51. Whoever has a more perfect mastery of the art that qualifies him for assuming an office is

more appropriate for inclusion among the elect. Therefore it follows that the most elect of the elect is the supreme ruler. It would appear that this is so because he is the one who does not confine himself in anything at all to what is in conformity with unexamined common opinion. He must hold the office of the supreme ruler and be the most elect of the elect because of his state of character and skill. As for the one who assumes a political office [38] with the intention of accomplishing the purpose of the supreme ruler, he adheres to thoroughly scrutinized opinions. However, the opinions that caused him to become an adherent<sup>21</sup> or because of which he was convinced that he should use his art to serve the supreme ruler, were based on mere conformity to unexamined opinions; he conforms to unexamined common opinion in his theoretical cognitions as well. The result is that the supreme ruler and he who possesses the science that encompasses the intelligibles with certain demonstrations belong to the elect. The rest are the vulgar and the multitude. Thus the methods of persuasion and imaginative representation are employed only in the instruction of the vulgar and the multitude of the nations and the cities, while the certain demonstrative methods, by which the beings themselves are made intelligible, are employed in the instruction of those who belong to the elect.

52. This is the superior science and the one with the most perfect [claim to rule or to] authority. The rest of the authoritative sciences are subordinate to this science. By "the rest of the authoritative sciences" I mean the second and the third, and that which is derived from them,<sup>22</sup> since these sciences merely follow the example of that science and are employed to accomplish the purpose of that science, which is supreme happiness and the final perfection to be achieved by man.

53. It is said that this science existed anciently among the Chaldeans,<sup>23</sup> who are the people of al-ʿIrāq,<sup>24</sup> subsequently reaching the people of

21. Or "follower," "successor" (*tābi*). He functions as an "aide" or "subordinate" who is employed by the supreme ruler to apply and preserve his law (above, secs. 44, 47–48). In the absence of the supreme ruler, the "adherent" is envisaged as his "successor." This is a second-best arrangement, because the ruler will then lack theoretical knowledge and hence the ability to be a true lawgiver (above, secs. 45 ff.). Cf. Alfarabi *The Political Regime* 82, 87 (above, selection 3).

22. Above, sec. 46.

23. For an account of the "philosophic" sciences (mathematics, astronomy, etc.) of the "Chaldeans," cf., e.g., Šāʿid al-Andalusī, *Classes of Nations [Ṭabaqāt al-umam]*, ed. Louis Cheiko (Beirut, 1912) 4.3.

24. Southern Mesopotamia, the alluvial region bounded on the north by a line from al-Anbār to Takrit. Cf. al-Andalusī *Classes of Nations* 1.



Egypt,<sup>25</sup> from there transmitted to the Greeks, where it remained until it was transmitted to the Syrians,<sup>26</sup> and then to the Arabs. Everything comprised by this science was expounded in the Greek language, later in Syriac, and finally in Arabic. The Greeks who possessed this science used to call it "unqualified wisdom" and the "highest wisdom." They called the acquisition of it "science" and the scientific state of mind "philosophy" (by which they meant the quest and the love for the highest wisdom). [39] They held that potentially it subsumes all the virtues. They called it the "science of sciences," the "mother of sciences," the "wisdom of wisdoms," and the "art of arts" (they meant the art that makes use of all the arts, the virtue that makes use of all the virtues, and the wisdom that makes use of all wisdoms). Now, "wisdom" may be used for consummate and extreme competence in any art whatsoever when it leads to performing feats of which most practitioners of that art are incapable. Here "wisdom" is used in a qualified sense. Thus he who is extremely competent in an art is said to be "wise" in that art. Similarly, a man with penetrating practical judgment and acumen may be called "wise" in the thing regarding which he has penetrating practical judgment. However, unqualified wisdom is this science and *state of mind alone*.

54. When the theoretical sciences are isolated and their possessor does not have the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of others, they are defective philosophy. To be a truly perfect philosopher, one has to possess both the theoretical sciences and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of all others according to their capacity. Were one to consider the case of the true philosopher, he would find no difference between him and the supreme ruler. For he who possesses the faculty for exploiting what is comprised by the theoretical matters for the benefit of all others possesses the faculty for making such matters intelligible as well as for bringing into actual existence those of them that depend on the will. The greater his power to do the latter, the more perfect is his philosophy. Therefore, he who is truly perfect possesses with sure insight, first, the theoretical virtues, and subsequently the practical. Moreover, he possesses the capacity for bringing

them about in nations and cities in the manner and the measure possible with reference to each. Since it is impossible for him to possess the faculty for bringing them about except by employing certain demonstrations, persuasive methods, [40] as well as methods that represent things through images—and this either with the consent of others or by compulsion—it follows that the true philosopher is himself the supreme ruler.

55. Every instruction is composed of two things: (a) making what is being studied comprehensible and causing its idea to be established in the soul and (b) causing others to assent to what is comprehended and established in the soul. There are two ways of making a thing comprehensible: first, by causing its essence to be perceived by the intellect, and second, by causing it to be imagined through the similitude that imitates it. Assent, too, is brought about by one of two methods, either the method of certain demonstration or the method of persuasion. Now when one acquires knowledge of the beings or receives instruction in them, if he perceives their ideas themselves with his intellect, and his assent to them is by means of certain demonstration, then the science that comprises these cognitions is philosophy. But if they are known by imagining them through similitudes that imitate them, and assent to what is imagined of them is caused by persuasive methods, then the ancients call what comprises these cognitions "religion." And if those intelligibles themselves are adopted, and persuasive methods are used, then the religion comprising them is called "popular," "generally accepted," and "external philosophy." Therefore, according to the ancients, religion is an imitation of philosophy. Both comprise the same subjects and both give an account of the ultimate principles of the beings. For both supply knowledge about the first principle and cause of the beings, and both give an account of the ultimate end for the sake of which man is made—that is, supreme happiness—and the ultimate end of every one of the other beings. In everything of which philosophy gives an account based on intellectual perception or conception, religion gives an account based on imagination. In everything demonstrated by philosophy, religion employs persuasion. Philosophy gives an account of the ultimate principles

*not for - external philosophy*

25. Ibid. 4.6. Šā'id al-Andalusī reports the popular myth of the "prophetic" origin of the philosophic sciences. In addition to claiming that philosophy *alone* is true wisdom, Alfarabi insists (below, sec. 55 [41:12]) that "philosophy is prior to religion in time."

26. al-Siryān: the Jacobite and Nestorian (Monophysite) Christians using Syriac as a literary medium in Syria, Mesopotamia, and the Persian Empire.



(that is, the essence of the first principle and the essences of the incorporeal second principles),<sup>27</sup> [41] as they are perceived by the intellect. Religion sets forth their images by means of similitudes of them taken from corporeal principles and imitates them by their likenesses among political offices.<sup>28</sup> It imitates the divine acts by means of the functions of political offices.<sup>29</sup> It imitates the actions of natural powers and principles by their likenesses among the faculties, states, and arts that have to do with the will, just as Plato does in the *Timaeus*.<sup>30</sup> It imitates the intelligibles by their likenesses among the sensibles: for instance, some imitate matter by [terms such as] “abyss” or “darkness” or “water,” and nothingness by “darkness.” It imitates the classes of supreme happiness—that is, the ends of the acts of the human virtues—by their likenesses among the goods that are believed to be the ends. It imitates the classes of true happiness by means of the ones that are believed to be happiness. It imitates the ranks of the beings by their likenesses among spatial and temporal ranks. And it attempts to bring the similitudes of these things as close as possible to their essences.<sup>31</sup> Also, in everything of which philosophy gives an account that is demonstrable and certain, religion gives an account based on persuasive arguments. Finally, philosophy is prior to religion in time.

56. Again, it is evident that when one seeks to bring into actual existence the intelligibles of the things depending on the will supplied by practical philosophy, he ought to prescribe the conditions that render possible their actual existence. Once the conditions that render their actual existence possible are prescribed, the voluntary intelligibles are embodied in laws. Therefore the legislator is he who, by the excellence of his deliberation, has the capacity to find the conditions required for the actual existence of voluntary intelligibles in such a way as to lead to the achievement of supreme happiness. It is also evident that only after perceiving them by his intellect should the legislator seek to discover their conditions, and he cannot [42] find their conditions that enable him to guide others toward supreme happiness without having perceived supreme happiness with his intellect. Nor can these things become intelligible (and the legislative craft thereby hold the supreme office)

without his having beforehand acquired philosophy. Therefore, if he intends to possess a craft that is authoritative rather than subservient, the legislator must be a philosopher. Similarly, if the philosopher who has acquired the theoretical virtues does not have the capacity for bringing them about in all others according to their capacities, then what he has acquired from it has no validity. Yet he cannot find the states and the conditions by which the voluntary intelligibles assume actual existence, if he does not possess the deliberative virtue; and the deliberative virtue cannot exist in him without the practical virtue. Moreover, he cannot bring them about in all others according to their capacities, except by a faculty that enables him to excel in persuasion and in representing things through images.

57. It follows, then, that the idea of Imam, Philosopher, and Legislator is a single idea. However, the name “philosopher” signifies primarily theoretical virtue. But if it be determined that the theoretical virtue reaches its ultimate perfection in every respect, it follows necessarily that he must possess all the other faculties as well. “Legislator” signifies excellence of knowledge concerning the conditions of practical<sup>32</sup> intelligibles, the faculty for finding them, and the faculty for bringing them about in nations and cities. When it is determined that they be brought into existence on the basis of knowledge, it will follow that the theoretical virtue must precede the others—the existence of the inferior presupposes the existence of the higher. The name “prince” signifies sovereignty and ability. To be completely able, one has to possess [43] the power of the greatest ability. His ability to do a thing must not result only from external things; he himself must possess great ability because his art, skill, and virtue are of exceedingly great power. This is not possible except by great power of knowledge, great power of deliberation, and great power of [moral] virtue and art. Otherwise he is not truly able nor sovereign. For if his ability stops short of this, it is still imperfect. Similarly, if his ability is restricted to goods inferior to supreme happiness, his ability is incomplete and he is not perfect. Therefore the true prince is the same as the philosopher-legislator. As to the idea of Imam in the Arabic language, it signifies merely

27. The causes or principles of the heavenly bodies.

28. Alfarabi says “principles.” Cf. above, note 5.

29. Alfarabi says “principles.” Cf. above, note 5.

30. See *Timaeus* 19D, 21B–C, 29B ff.

31. See selection 3, Alfarabi *The Political Regime* 89–91.

32. “Practical” as distinguished from “incorporeal” and “natural.” They are the intelligibles whose realization depends on deliberation, moral character, and art. Above, secs. 22 ff., 40.



the one whose example is followed and who is well received: that is, either his perfection is well received or his purpose is well received. If he is not well received in all the infinite activities, virtues, and arts, then he is not truly well received. Only when all other arts, virtues, and activities seek to realize his purpose and no other, will his art be the most powerful art, his [moral] virtue the most powerful virtue, his deliberation the most powerful deliberation, and his science the most powerful science. For with all of these powers he will be exploiting the powers of others so as to accomplish his own purpose. This is not possible without the theoretical sciences, without the greatest of all deliberative virtues, and without the rest of those things that are in the philosopher.

58. So let it be clear to you that the idea of the Philosopher, Supreme Ruler, Prince, Legislator, and Imam is but a single idea. No matter which one of these words you take, if you proceed to look at what each of them signifies [44] among the majority of those who speak our language, you will find that they all finally agree by signifying one and the same idea.

59. Once the images representing the theoretical things<sup>33</sup> demonstrated in the theoretical sciences are produced in the souls of the multitude and they are made to assent to their images, and once the practical things (together with the conditions of the possibility of their existence) take hold of their souls and dominate them so that they are unable to resolve to do anything else; then the theoretical and practical things are realized. Now these things are philosophy when they are in the soul of the legislator. They are religion when they are in the souls of the multitude. For when the legislator knows these things, they are evident to him by sure insight, whereas what is established in the souls of the multitude is through an image and a persuasive argument. Although it is the legislator who also represents these things through images, neither the images nor the persuasive arguments are intended for himself. As far as he is concerned, they are certain. He is the one who invents the images and the persuasive arguments, but not for the sake of establishing these things in his own soul as a religion for himself. No, the images and the

persuasive arguments are intended for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, these things are certain. They are a religion for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, they are philosophy. Such, then, is true philosophy and the true philosopher.

60. As for mutilated philosophy: the counterfeit philosopher, the vain philosopher, or the false philosopher is the one who sets out to study the theoretical sciences without being prepared for them. For he who sets out to inquire ought to be innately equipped for the theoretical sciences—that is, fulfill the conditions prescribed by Plato in the *Republic*.<sup>34</sup> He should excel in comprehending and conceiving that which is essential. Moreover, he should have good memory and be able to endure the toil of study. He should love truthfulness and truthful people, and justice and just people; [45] and not be headstrong or a wrangler about what he desires. He should not be gluttonous for food and drink, and should by natural disposition disdain the appetites, the dirhem, the dinar, and the like. He should be great-souled (*kabir al-nafs*)<sup>35</sup> and avoid what is disgraceful in people. He should be pious, yield easily to goodness and justice, and be stubborn in yielding to evil and injustice. And he should be strongly determined in favor of the right thing. Moreover, he should be brought up according to laws and habits that resemble his innate disposition. He should have sound conviction about the opinions of the religion in which he is reared, hold fast to the virtuous acts in his religion, and not forsake all or most of them. Furthermore, he should hold fast to the generally accepted virtues and not forsake the generally accepted noble acts. For if a youth is such, and then sets out to study philosophy and learns it, it is possible that he will not become a counterfeit or a vain or a false philosopher. *maxim*

61. The false philosopher is he who acquires the theoretical sciences without achieving the utmost perfection so as to be able to introduce others to what he knows insofar as their capacity permits. The vain philosopher is he who learns the theoretical sciences, but without going any further and without being habituated to doing the acts considered virtuous by a certain religion or the generally accepted noble acts. Instead, he follows his own

33. "Things" (*ashyā*). The term *shay'* is used throughout in a variety of senses (roughly corresponding to "being"). It can signify particulars or universals, what exists outside the mind or the intelligible ideas (as here), the objects of knowledge or of opinion and imagination (as in the rest of the section).

34. *Republic* 375A ff., 485B ff., passim.

35. Compare Ibn Bajja, selection 9, note 33.



inclination and appetites in everything, whatever they may happen to be. The counterfeit philosopher is he who studies the theoretical sciences without being naturally equipped for them. Therefore, although the counterfeit and the vain may complete the study of the theoretical sciences, in the end their possession of them diminishes little by little. By the time they reach the age at which [46] a man should become perfect in the virtues, their knowledge will have been completely extinguished, even more so than the extinction of the fire [sun] of Heraclitus mentioned by Plato.<sup>36</sup> For the natural dispositions of the former and the habit of the latter overpower what they might have remembered in their youth and make it burdensome for them to retain what they had patiently toiled for. They neglect it, and what they retain begins to diminish little by little until its fire becomes ineffective and extinguished, and they gather no fruit from it. As for the false philosopher, he is the one who is not yet aware of the purpose for which philosophy is pursued. He acquires the theoretical sciences, or only some portion of them, and holds the opinion that the purpose of the measure he has acquired consists in certain kinds of happiness that are believed to be so or are considered by the multitude to be good things. Therefore he rests there to enjoy that happiness, aspiring to achieve this purpose with his knowledge. He may achieve his purpose and settle for it, or else find his purpose difficult to achieve and so hold the opinion that the knowledge he has is superfluous. Such is the false philosopher.

62. The true philosopher is the one mentioned before.<sup>37</sup> If after reaching this stage no use is made of him, the fact that he is of no use to others is not

his fault but the fault of those who either do not listen or are not of the opinion that they should listen to him. Therefore the prince or the imam is prince or imam by virtue of his skill and art, regardless of whether or not anyone acknowledges him, whether or not he is obeyed, whether or not he is supported in his purpose by any group; just as the physician is physician by virtue of his skill and his ability to heal the sick, whether or not there are sick men for him to heal, whether or not he finds tools to use in his activity, whether he is prosperous or poor—not having any of these things does not do away with his physicianship. Similarly, neither the imamate of the imam, [47] the philosophy of the philosopher, nor the princship of the prince is done away with by his not having tools to use in his activities or men to employ in reaching his purpose.

63. The philosophy that answers to this description was handed down to us by the Greeks from Plato and Aristotle only. Both have given us an account of philosophy, but not without giving us also an account of the ways to it and of the ways to re-establish it when it becomes confused or extinct. We shall begin by expounding first the philosophy of Plato and the orders of rank in his philosophy. We shall begin with the first part of the philosophy of Plato, and then order one part of his philosophy after another until we reach its end. We shall do the same with the philosophy presented to us by Aristotle, beginning with the first part of his philosophy.

64. So let it be clear to you that, in what they presented, their purpose is the same, and that they intended to offer one and the same philosophy.

36. *Republic* 498B; cf. Aristotle *Meteorologica* 355a9 ff.

37. Secs. 53, 57, 59.